

## WHAT A GLORIOUS MYSTERY

### SESSION #5

**Review:** We discussed in our last session about the power and plan of God to break down the middle wall between the Jew and Gentile and unite the two together under the headship of His Only Begotten Son, Christ Jesus. We discussed how Paul gave us the imagery of the Gentile's separation from the Jewish God in the Temple worship structures and partitions. Anyone outside of the Jewish culture and covenant had to worship the God of Creation at a distance. But, in Christ Jesus, "the middle wall of separation" was torn down, allowing all who approached God's dwelling place and throne by the final blood sacrifice of Christ, could do so unhindered. The wall was torn down. The curtain veil was ripped from top to bottom. The old walls and temple structures and divisions were ultimately torn down. Now, Christ offers forgiveness from sin with One Blood. Now, Christ has One Family. Now, Christ is building One New & Living Temple with all of His family gathered near to worship.

**Ephesians 3:1** *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles...*

#### **I. A PRISON SENTENCE TURNED PROPHETIC INTERCESSOR AND PREACHER**

- A. *"Nothing touches us that hasn't first passed through the fingers of God. Nothing!" (Charles Swindoll)*
- B. Remember, Paul was whipped with strips, stoned with rocks, beaten, imprisoned, etc. and then one of the most extensive imprisonments for Paul was while under house-arrest in Rome for 2 years. Paul turns his imprisonment into prayer and prophetic teaching under the grace and authority of Christ Jesus.
- C. What would you do with a prison sentence? Paul the Apostle becomes the greatest New Testament Writer and Intercessor in our Biblical history. John the Apostle turns his Patmos prison sentence into an occasion to receive the clearest 'Revelation' of Jesus for us today. Wow!!!!
- D. We hear Paul in essence saying, *"I was placed in prison because I have dared to believe this mystery of God to save and adopt both Jews and Gentile and bring them into His family as one new family. And now, because of this imprisonment, God has allowed me to serve you as an Intercessor and Prophetic Messenger to you."*
- E. **Verse 1-** It is so interesting as you begin to read this verse, it seems as if Paul is about to "bend his knees in prayer" again for the Ephesians.
- F. **Verse 2-** Paul declares his ministry assignment from God as to the Gentiles. Paul had become a steward of the grace of God to the Gentiles.
- G. **Verse 3-** Paul said that this divine revelation from God was a mystery.
  - a. Paul specifically calls it "The Mystery".
  - b. **Greek-** 'mysterion'- revealed truth that was once hidden
  - c. *"...English & Greek words do not have the same meaning. In English, a 'mystery' is something dark, obscure, secret, puzzling...The Greek word 'mysterion' is different, however. Although still a 'secret', it's no longer closely guarded but open...The Christian 'mysteries' are truth which, although beyond human discovery, have been revealed by God and so now belong openly to the whole church." (John Stott)*
- H. This mystery that Paul refers to is the "mystery of Christ" (**vs. 4-6**) was hidden in the heart of Christ from generations past and only revealed in part through to the firstborn sons of Israel. Now, Paul receives this revelation and begins to declare it to Jew and Gentile alike.
- I. **Verse 7-** Paul gives the testimony that he did not choose this calling for himself. He was chosen and anointed by God to be a minister.

- a. **Greek-** *'diakonos'* one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister
- b. Paul didn't choose the apostleship duties, missionary journeys, or especially martyrdom. God chose him and appointed him.

## II. PAUL PREACHES OF THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY

- A. **Ephesians 3:8-13** *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,<sup>9</sup> and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;<sup>10</sup> to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,<sup>11</sup> according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,<sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.<sup>13</sup> Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*
- B. **Verses 8-12-** Here we have another 'run-on' sentence from Paul, as he attempts to express God's magnificent plans and dreams but is reluctant to end the thought due to punctuation. It is as if the river of life is flowing from his readied and anointed pen. It reminds me of **Ps. 45:1**.
- C. **Psalms 45:1** *My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*
- D. Paul was called and tasked to two primary assignments for his life:
  - a. Preach the gospel/good news of the "unsearchable riches of Christ".
    - i. **Unsearchable (Gk. anexichniastos)-** cannot be fully searched out; limitless and inexhaustible in its full discovery
    - ii. How rich is Christ? What is He wealthy in? Where and Who does Christ share His wealth?  
(Hint: Read **Eph. 1:18!**)
  - b. Reveal the hidden mysteries of the Church of Christ to his generation. God chose to hide His wisdom until to appointed time, after the completion of salvation in and through the sacrifice of His Son. Now, He is actively revealing His wisdom to the world and to the unseen angels and demons.
  - c. **1 Peter 1:12** *To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.*
  - d. "If angels of God had a steep learning curve to master, surely the wicked spirits were left in the dust." (Chuck Swindoll)
- E. Our continual weakness and struggle against the sinful nature reminds us that we need the power and presence of Christ. It serves as a continual witness that God is revealing His love and grace to us through Christ. Christ has and is continually setting us free as we surrender to Him. Hahaha! Win win!
- F. **1 Corinthians 2:8** *"which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*
- G. **Verse 13-** Paul shares his Pastoral and Apostolic heart with the Ephesians by encouraging them not to become burdened or offended by his suffering and imprisonment. Paul says that God was turning his sufferings into their glory.
- H. "By grace, Paul had been called into the ministry. By grace he had been equipped to reveal God's mystery to the Gentiles. By grace God incorporated both Jew and Gentile into one church. By grace we, the church, proclaim the riches of God's salvation to each new generation." (Chuck Swindoll)

### III. PAUL PRAYS FOR THE COMPREHENSION OF THE MYSTERY

- A. **Ephesians 3:14-21** *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup>that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup>to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup>Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>21</sup>to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
- B. **Acts 20:36-38** *And when he (Paul) had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup>Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, <sup>38</sup>sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.*
- C. **Ephesians 3:14-19** is a prayer to experience more of God and also gives insight into Paul's approach to discipling young believers. Paul presents four stages in our growth in God as indicated by the four times he used the word "**that**," designating four distinct aspects of spiritual growth.
- D. **Ephesians 3:14-19** *...I bow my knees to the Father...<sup>15</sup>from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup>that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell [manifest His presence] in your hearts...that you...<sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup>to know the love of Christ...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*
1. **Stage #1** (3:16)—We pray that the Spirit **strengthens our inner man** (mind and emotions) to enable us to love and obey Jesus. It takes God's power to love God and to understand His heart.
  2. **Stage #2** (3:17)—Jesus *dwelling in our heart* or manifesting His presence on our hearts.
  3. **Stage #3** (3:18)—We receive a greater capacity *to comprehend* how He sees and feels about others.
  4. **Stage #4** (3:19)—We are equipped to walk in the *fullness of God's purposes* in each season of life.
- E. In **Ephesians 3:16-19**, Paul used different terminology when presenting the same truths that Jesus taught in **John 15:5** when He called believers to "*abide in Christ*" and promised to "*abide in them*" which empowers them to "*bear much fruit*" that is expressed in loving and ministering to people.
- F. Jesus is the vine, or the source of life, and we are the branches, the expression of His life.
- G. **John 15:5** *"I am the vine (source of Life); you are the branches. He who abides in Me (talks to Me), and I in him, bears much fruit."*
- H. **Abiding in Christ**: This involves *talking with God, applying His promises, and obeying Him*.
- I. **Talking with Jesus**: Talking with God is the core activity of abiding. It starts here but includes more. This corresponds with "*praying for the Spirit to strengthen our inner man*" (**Eph. 3:16**).
- J. **Applying His Promises**: Applying the promises of His Word empowers us to bear fruit. Shame, fear, and rejection rise up to challenge what He says about loving, forgiving, healing, providing for us, etc. We apply the promise of the Word to our hearts by *confessing the truth* and *resisting lies* against it when we feel shame (**Rom. 8:1; 10:10**). Applying His promises is an expression of praying or "talking to God" by agreeing with what He says about us.
- K. **Obedying His leadership**: Obedience is an expression of our love for Him. We talk to Jesus with a "spirit of truth" by intending to obey what we talk to Him about—it is not empty talk.
- L. **John 14:21** *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.*

**IV. STAGE 1: PRAYING FOR STRENGTH TO OBEY GOD—ABIDING IN CHRIST**

- A. We pray that the Spirit **strengthens our inner man** (mind and emotions) by illuminating our thoughts with living understanding and inspiring our emotions so that we are energized by His divine might to sustain our commitment to obey Jesus and to realign to His kingdom perspective.
- B. **Ephesians 3:16** “...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man (mind and emotions) ...
- C. Our prayer for daily strength is connected to “abiding in Christ,” which is the same as talking to Him.
- D. “It takes God’s power to love God and to understand His Word. He will strengthen us as we ask Him on a regular basis. Jesus taught us to ask for ‘daily bread’—daily inspiration, direction, and provision.” (Mike Bickle)
- E. God instructed Moses to tell Israel to gather manna on a daily basis (**Ex. 16:16-22; Jn 6:58**).
- F. **James 4:6-8** “But He gives more grace...<sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”

**V. STAGE 2: CHRIST DWELLING IN OUR HEART—CHRIST ABIDING IN US**

- A. Jesus *dwelling in our hearts* or manifesting His presence on our hearts enables us to feel God’s love as our life progressively becomes more *deeply rooted and grounded* in experiencing God’s love. Paul connects two ideas together in 3:17—they are two sides of one coin pointing to the same truth.
- B. **Ephesians 3:16-19** ...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,<sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell (rest/abide/find a home) in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend ...<sup>19</sup>the love of Christ...
- C. **That Christ may dwell in our heart:** This speaks of an on-going or somewhat continual experience of His presence to convince us of His love in contrast to an occasional sense of it.
- D. **Christ abides in us:** The Spirit dwells in our spirit *instantly* at our new birth. Jesus *progressively* “abides in us” or manifests His presence in us by inspiring our mind and emotions.
- E. **John 15:5** “...He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...”
- F. One distinctive of the new covenant is that He writes His word on our heart and mind by illuminating our mind and inspiring our emotions.
- G. **Hebrews 10:16** “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them...”
- H. Jesus’ manifest presence dwelling in our heart speaks of the Spirit actively inspiring our mind and emotions. In other words, He reveals and convinces us that God loves us in a personal way.
- I. There is a deep correlation between our obedience to Jesus (pure heart) and our ability to “see Him” which includes feeling His presence and understanding His heart. We do not *earn* God’s blessing by our purity but *position ourselves* to receive more grace by walking in obedient love.
- J. **Matthew 5:8** *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
- K. **Rooted and grounded in love:** Paul used architectural and agricultural terms to convey our lives being spiritually strong in the midst of storms—of fears, accusations, temptations, pressures, etc. Being “rooted” is related to agriculture and being “grounded” to the architecture of a building.
- L. If we are rooted in wrong mindsets, we will be dominated by them. If we are rooted in Truth, we will be ruled by God’s thoughts.
- M. A tree that is deeply rooted and a house that is built on solid ground doesn’t blow over in a storm.
- N. God’s primary method in changing His people is to reveal how much He loves and cherishes them. The enemy wears down many with accusations and condemnation. Being preoccupied with shame and fear

takes energy to manage, and it hinders us from going deep in God and from loving others. There is deliverance and freedom for you today!

## VI. STAGE 3: COMPREHENDING HOW GOD SEES AND FEELS FOR OTHERS—BEAR FRUIT

- A. **Stage #3** We receive a greater capacity **to comprehend** how He sees and feels about others.
- B. **Ephesians 3:17-19** *that Christ may dwell in your hearts...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— <sup>19</sup>to know (experience and express) the love of Christ which passes knowledge...*
- C. **With all the saints:** The Spirit allows us to see God's heart for His people. We receive from God in three ways—directly, by expressing it to others, and by others expressing and imparting it to us.
- D. **Passes knowledge:** It requires the aid of the Spirit to understand and experience God's love. The Spirit gives the ability to comprehend the value, destiny, and greatness of others and to see their weakness through the lens of God's patient love. Thus, we can celebrate who others are in God.
- E. **Bears much fruit:** We bear fruit inwardly in our character (love) and outwardly in our ministry of love to others. This corresponds with stage #3 in Paul's prayer here in **Ephesians 3:18**.
- F. **John 15:5** *"...He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit..."*
- G. **God's 4-dimensional love:** Paul highlighted different aspect of the Father's love.
  - 1. The **width** of God's love embraces every person, personality type, and rank in society.
  - 2. The **length** of God's love speaks of how far it reaches beyond our greatest sin and how long it lasts—forever through all ages. It is not short-lived but long enough to stretch to all eternity.
  - 3. The **depth** of love speaks of the lowest depths to which Jesus stooped or descended to redeem us (**Phil. 2:6-9**) and the depths that God's heart opened to us (**1 Cor. 2:10**).
  - 4. The **heights** of love include the exaltation that we receive in reigning with Him (Rev. 3:21).
- H. Referring to **Ephesians 3:18**, **"Broad enough to cover anybody! Long enough to go beyond any barrier! High enough to take us all the way to glory and beyond! Deep enough to touch any need, any sin, or any hurt!"** (Chuck Swindoll)

## VII. STAGE 4: THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S BLESSING IN EACH SEASON OF LIFE

- A. **Stage #4** Being equipped to walk in the *fullness of God's purposes* in each season of life.
- B. **Ephesians 3:19** *...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (of our destiny).*
- C. The full destiny for our life will only be released as we live in agreement with His leadership.
- D. *"Paul continues to set forth one impossibility after another. Unconditional love...unknowable knowledge...and now being filled by an infinite God...He prays that to the fullest extent of our human capacities, we would overflow with God's strength, love, and knowledge."* (Chuck Swindoll)